

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 IO-04 /055 W

----- 116504

P R 050958Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5368

USIA WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 14372

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

LUSAKA FOR HAVERKAMP

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, UK, US

SUBJECT: SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT

REF: (A) LONDON 14302 (B) LONDON 14306

1. SUMMARY. SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT CONTINUES TO MAKE HEAD-
LINES IN UK WITH MUCH OF MEDIA REPORTING THAT HMG HAS
REACHED DECISION TO PHASE OUT SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT WITH

VIEW TO EVENTUAL FORMAL ABROGATION. REPORTS SAY FOREIGN
SECRETARY CALLAGHAN MADE PROPOSAL TO CUT MILITARY COOPER-
ATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA IN CABINET OCTOBER 31. THIS MEANS
THAT THREE MINISTERS WHO VOTED FOR CENSURE OF GOVERNMENT
IN LABOR PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MIGHT HAVE KNOWN THAT
CALLAGHAN WAS WORKING ON THIS SUBJECT WHEN THEY VOTED
AGAINST HIM THE DAY BEFORE. THIS, IT IS SAID, EXPLAINS
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PRIME MINISTER'S ANGER TOWARD THE THREE MINISTERS. MANY

NEWSPAPERS EMPHASIZE REPORTS THAT U.S. OR FRANCE ARE READY TO TAKE UK PLACE IN SIMONSTOWN IF UK WITHDRAWS. OFFICIAL SOURCES SAY NO CONSIDERATION IS YET BEING GIVEN IN FCO OR MOD TO FORMAL ABROGATION. END SUMMARY.

2. ALL NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO AND TV NEWS PROGRAMS NOV 2-5 GAVE PROMINENCE TO REPORTS AND COMMENTARY ON DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN HMG ON POSSIBLE ENDING OF SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT. MOST REPORTS WERE TO THE EFFECT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS REACHED A TENTATIVE DECISION TO ALLOW THE AGREEMENT TO LAPSE BY NOT EXERCISING ITS PROVISIONS FOR BRITISH ACCESS TO THE SIMONSTOWN FACILITY. THE MEDIA SPECULATE THAT A

FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE POLICY WILL BE DELAYED UNTIL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE OVERALL RESULTS OF THE UK DEFENSE REVIEW, SOMETIME AFTER THE FIRST OF THE YEAR.

3. MANY NEWSPAPERS HEADLINED REPORTS EMANATING FROM SOUTH AFRICA THAT THE U.S. AND FRANCE ARE READY TO "MOVE IN" TO TAKE BRITAIN'S PLACE IN SIMONSTOWN. THEY CITE THE IMPENDING VISIT OF SOUTH AFRICAN VICE ADMIRAL JAMES JOHNSON TO THE U.S. AS EVIDENCE OF U.S. INTEREST. SOME SAY THAT UK IS UNDER CONTINUING PRESSURE FROM U.S. NOT TO LEAVE THE SIMONSTOWN FACILITY.

4. UK DOMESTIC POLITICAL ANGLE TO STORIES IS REPORT THAT FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN CIRCULATED A PAPER IN CABINET MEETING ON OCT 31 RECOMMENDING THAT USE OF SIMONSTOWN BE PHASED OUT. THIS MIGHT MEAN THAT THE THREE MINISTERS WHO VOTED IN LABOR PARTY NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON OCT. 30 TO CENSURE GOVERNMENT ON RN SHIP VISITS COULD HAVE KNOWN THAT GOVERNMENT POLICY WAS BEING RECONSIDERED. IF TRUE, THIS COULD EXPLAIN PRIME MINISTER WILSON'S SHARP

ACTION TOWARD THE GUILTY MINISTERS (REF A).

5. CONSERVATIVE PARTY GOT IN ON THE ACTION ON NOV 4 WHEN SHADOW DEFENSE SPOKESMAN PETER WALKER MADE A PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY ON THE QUESTION OF SIMONSTOWN. WALKER SAID THAT ABANDONMENT OF SIMONSTOWN WOULD BE "SHEER FOLLY."
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CALLAGHAN RESPONDED THAT QUESTION WAS "UNDER REVIEW" BUT ALL NOV 5 NEWSPAPERS TOOK THIS TO BE CONFIRMATION THAT POLICY OF ALLOWING AGREEMENT TO WITHER WAS CONFIRMED.

6. ROBERT CORMACK, ASSISTANT HEAD OF FCO DEFENSE DEPT., TELLS US THAT CALLAGHAN DID CIRCULATE A PAPER ON SIMONSTOWN IN CABINET ON OCTOBER 31. IN THE PAPER, CALLAGHAN SUGGESTED THAT UK USE OF THE FACILITY SHOULD BE REDUCED,

ALLOWING UK RIGHTS TO "WITHER ON THE VINE." BUT, CORMACK EMPHASIZED, CALLAGHAN DID NOT SUGGEST UNILATERAL ABROGATION OF AGREEMENT. OFFICIALS IN FCO AND MOD AGREE THAT SIMONSTOWN USE CAN BE CUT SHARPLY WITH NO ADVERSE EFFECT BUT THEY HOPE AGREEMENT WILL BE KEPT ON THE BOOKS IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.

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7. IRONICALLY, CRUISER HMS LLANDAFF, PRESENTLY ON BEIRA PATROL HAD COLLISION WITH ITS OILER IN LAST FEW DAYS. RN IS REQUESTING THAT LLANDAFF BE PERMITTED TO GO TO SIMONSTOWN FOR NECESSARY REPAIRS IN VERY NEAR FUTURE. CORMACK SAID MINISTERS APPEAR TO BE READY TO APPROVE VISIT FOR THIS PURPOSE. ONE NEWSPAPER, DAILY EXPRESS, HAS PART OF THIS STORY (NO REPORT OF THE COLLISION ITSELF). THE CONFIRMATION OF THE VISIT WILL ONLY ADD FUEL TO THE SIMONSTOWN FIRE.

8. COMMENT: CLEARLY THE SIMONSTOWN ISSUE IS NOT GOING TO DIE A QUICK DEATH IN UK. THE LEFT WING OF THE LABOR

PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR IMMEDIATE FORMAL ABRO-
GATION. LABOR FRONT BENCH DOES NOT SEEM READY TO MOVE
TOWARD ANYTHING BUT A LOWER LEVEL OF USE OF THE FACILITY.
THE CONSERVATIVES WILL CONTINUE TO COMPLAIN THAT EVEN
THIS WILL THREATEN THE SECURITY OF THE UK. WE CAN EXPECT
THE U.S. TO CONTINUE TO BE DRAGGED INTO THE PICTURE
EITHER AS A LIKELY SUCCESSOR TO UK OR AS AN INJURED PARTY
WHOSE CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY OF INDIAN OCEAN WILL LEAD TO
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MORE PRESSURE ON UK TO MAINTAIN AGREEMENT IN FACT AS WELL
AS IN NAME. END COMMENT.

9. EMBASSY IS CONTINUING TO RECEIVE PRESS INQUIRIES ON
U.S. ATTITUDE TOWARD SIMONSTOWN CONTROVERSY. PURSUANT
STATE 242431 WE WILL SET UP PRESS BACKGROUNDER.

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